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ABSTRACT

A study surveyed 370 administrators in four-year institutions in the mid-southern United States to identify factors that enhance administrative placement with regard to gender. By administrative position, the sample included the following: 20 presidents/chancellors/provosts; 50 vice-presidents/vice-chancellors; 100 deans; and 200 department or division chairs/department-division heads. The response rate to mailed questionnaires was 73 percent. The dependent variable of administrative aspiration was analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance with univariate follow-up tests on each of the multivariate effects. The following findings relate to male respondents: most found networking helpful in reaching career goals and rated professional organizations and personal contacts as extremely important networking opportunities; 54.1% chose to remain at the current level, and most of those aspiring to higher positions chose the dean level. Results from female respondents indicated the following: 47.7% reported networking helped them obtain their current position and a large majority believe it is helpful in reaching career goals; most also rated professional organizations and personal contacts as extremely important; 52.3% desired to remain at the current level; and most who did not aspired to the dean level. The majority of both males and females had male mentors during their master's and doctoral programs. Significant effects were found in the variable of administrative aspiration and were not related to gender. Those administrators aspiring to a different level of administration would most likely be those with advancement opportunities available. (Appendixes include a list of 15 references and 4 data tables.) (YLB)

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Gender Profiles and Career Aspiration of Administrators in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that enhance administrative placement with regard to gender. Higher education administrator profiles were developed and aspiration levels were evaluated. Questionnaires were sent to 370 administrators in four-year institutions in the mid-south United States. The response rate was 73%. The dependent variable of administrative aspiration was analyzed utilizing multivariate analysis of variance with univariate follow-up tests on each of the multivariate effects. Profiles of male and female administrators were developed using descriptive statistics (age, race, education, experience, institutional affiliation and the utilization of mentoring and networking opportunities).

Demographic information and strategies for advancement were developed in the profiles which highlighted differences by gender. For the dependent variable of administrative aspiration, a significant effect was found for administrative position indicating significant multivariate difference between administrative position levels. Significant effects were found in the variable of administrative aspiration. Those administrators aspiring to a different level of administration would most likely be those with advancement opportunities available.

The findings of this study have implications for increasing placement opportunities in leadership positions. Profiles developed will provide insight and guidance for future administrators.

Gender Profiles and Career Aspiration of

Administrators in Higher Education

The study was designed to ascertain the personal and professional qualities, as well as demographic factors relating to achievement of administrative positions in higher education. This information will provide a better understanding of characteristics possessed by females currently holding positions in administration in higher education and provide a guideline for females seeking positions in higher education administration. Because of the underrepresentation of females in administrative positions in higher education, there is a need to explore and evaluate these characteristics in order to facilitate future administrative positioning of females.

Many women appear to lack leadership expectations and aspirations. Several reasons may be responsible for these lower levels of aspirations. For example, "McMillin (1975) studied leadership aspirations of prospective male and female teachers and found that among the women 'the likelihood of accepting leadership in a school or educational organization decreased as the level of responsibility increased'" (cited in Tibbets, 1979, p. 6). This particular study concluded that "women may have internalized the concept that high-level leadership roles are for men and not for women" (McMillin, 1975, cited in Tibbets, 1979, p. 6).

An explanation and discussion of women who have reached positions of higher education administration could prove to be helpful to those women aspiring to these positions or possibly to similar positions in other nontraditional fields. The results of the study will assist women aspiring to positions in higher education administration by providing

information to be used in formulating strategies for increased placement of women in such positions of leadership.

The overall purpose of the study was to better understand the factors that facilitate administrative placement and advancement of females in higher education. Specifically, the study focused on developing a better understanding of career factors as related to administrative position in higher education.

The study also provided the identification of demographics and behaviors relating to administrative placement and development. The resulting determination of a profile for female and male higher education administrative roles were developed.

The study addressed the question of whether career aspiration is important to advancement in administration in higher education, and if males and females treat these variables differently at different levels. Furthermore, a knowledge of the characteristics of females and males currently in administrative positions in higher education will be useful to those women aspiring to such administrative positions. The information gathered will provide a guideline for women hoping to attain administrative position in higher education.

Background

During the past decade, women have joined the work force in increasing numbers and more are interested in areas traditionally dominated by men. Putting aside the traditional gender-role-related expectations, many women are striving for positions in higher levels of administration, management and leadership within organizations and industries. It was pointed out that:

> Many women have paid their dues, even at a premium, for a chance at a top position, only to find a glass ceiling between them and their goal. The glass

> ceiling is not simply a barrier for an individual, based on the person's inability to handle a higher-level job. Rather, the glass ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women. (Morrison, White, & Van Velson, 1987, p. 13)

Although women demonstrate interests and possess qualifications in a wide range of occupations and career areas, many women are not welcomed, and/or supported in a variety of professional arenas. For example, men traditionally dominate areas such as upper level management and administration. Caliguri and Krueger (1988) suggested that "women are underrepresented in managerial positions in business and government as well as schools, earning lower salaries and achieving fewer leadership positions than men of equal educational preparation" (p. 2). The *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1991* supported the aforementioned statement by reporting that in 1989 females held 39.8% of the total executive, administrative, and managerial positions. The median earnings of females in the executive, administrative, and managerial occupational category was $18,778 compared to $27,430 for males. Women who strive for upper level administrative positions and who break the traditional female role expectations often encounter many conflicts and/or obstacles.

Various factors affect the advancement of females in educational administration as well as in business and government. Some of these potentially limiting factors found in the literature are stereotyping, little social preparation relating to a career in administration, and limited exposure to training in the skills of administration.

The *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1991* reported a total of 38,700 doctoral degrees were earned in the year 1990-1991. Of the total doctoral degrees, females earned 14,500 while males earned 24,200 of the degrees. The aforementioned statistics reflect the much larger number of males prepared to move into faculty and educational administrative positions as

compared to females. In addition, the *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1991* reports that in the Fall of 1987 the full-time regular instructional faculty in public comprehensive institutions of higher education was composed of 71.1% male and only 28.9% female. These statistics further reveal the underrepresentation of females in higher education institutions.

Personal characteristics are factors to consider when relating gender roles to education administration. According to Fauth (1984),

> women have been found to be more concerned than men about the academic achievement of students; to be more knowledgeable about curriculum; to value the productivity of their teachers: to demonstrate greater concern for individual differences, developmental problems, and social/emotional development of students. (p. 67)

Conventional role expectations for women revolve around expressive characteristics. In the area of education, female administrators indicated that females frequently tended to be stereotyped into "caretaker" roles, such as counselor and teacher, while their male counterparts were more likely to have responsibility for areas such as curriculum and budget (Picker, 1980).

However, the "socially prescribed" form of behavior is now taking on a new look in today's society. Many adults are attempting to avoid the reinforcement of traditional gender-related occupational stereotypes. Conversely, as Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter, & Friedman (1988) found, "despite the growing opportunities for women to work at jobs not open to them in the past, traditional gender roles remain firmly entrenched in our society" (p. 284). In other words, the females often had lower career aspirations and/or levels of achievement.

Sex role stereotyping is still a major complication to women aspiring to or currently in administrative roles. Picker (1980) warned that "women who plan to enter administrative careers and cope in a basically male environment must recognize and deal with the reality that they may

encounter some degree of discrimination in the selection and promotion process" (p. 148). Therefore, it is important for women to develop coping skills and mechanisms. These coping techniques may be taught in an educational setting or taught through mentoring.

Women may need to have more education and greater dedication than their male counterparts to be able to compete for administrative positions in higher education. This apparent inequality was also projected into new positions where men and women have to compete. "It appears that men are hired for advanced positions because they show potential for learning new skills on the job, while women are hired if they already possess the skills needed for the new job" (Lyman & Speizer, 1980, p. 32).

Research findings that may give hope to females wanting to break the gender role/traditional role mindset are becoming more prevalent in the literature. Results from a study by Picker (1980) indicated a trend where younger women entering administration are not waiting as long for their administrative appointments as did their older female colleagues. Also, Lyman and Speizer (1980) reported the contradiction of many widely held beliefs concerning the women who aspire to high-level administration positions in school systems. "Most women have not left the work force to have children; half of them do not ever have children, and most of them have been in the labor force a long time with or without children" (Lyman & Speizer, 1980, p. 35).

Career preferences are developed and influenced by many different variables. Bressler and Wendell (1980) discussed career choice influences in the following way:

> Gender explains by far the greatest proportion of the variance in the overall preferences for masculine and feminine careers. College experiences, nevertheless, apparently encourage both sexes, particularly the women, to reject conventional role prescriptions and are thus instrumental in markedly reducing initial male-female differences in occupational choice. (p. 661)

According to Picker (1980), "good career planning and high career aspirations are important factors for success . . ." (p. 148). However, central to exploring nontraditional career options is career planning.

Significantly more females aspired to male-dominated occupations than were actually expected to enter such occupations (Yanico, 1981). However, Mirides and Cote (1980) recorded statistics indicating 43% of the current work force was composed of women, and many of these women were beginning to enter fields traditionally considered to be within the male domain.

In the field of educational administration, "women tend to be concentrated in the lower and middle echelons . . . when women do occupy a higher managerial position, it is often a position with little power, few resources, and an unclear pattern for upward mobility" (Gupta, 1983, p. 1). The majority of women in administrative positions in higher education were in staff, rather than line, positions, or function as assistants (Curcio, Morsink, & Bridges, 1989).

As noted by Nevill and Schlecker (1988), women who are high in assertiveness were more likely to consider nontraditional as well as traditional occupations. Therefore, assertiveness training, as a complement to education dealing with career choices, would be viable help for females wishing to move into nontraditional roles.

Obviously, many barriers are presented to women striving to reach high levels of administration. Awareness of the barriers, as well as possible solutions and available alternatives, is of utmost importance to women seeking to achieve administrative roles.

Although barriers to the advancement of women have been acknowledged, overcoming the barriers requires diligence, professionalism and understanding. Educational programs may also help in overcoming these barriers.

Lyman and Speizer (1980) suggested that "few women have been socialized to have a clear sense of a career track to develop their leadership skills. . . . They have also been denied the support, opportunity and experience given to men" (p. 29). A realistic assessment of individual opportunities for advancement in administration may be the reason for the low number of women applying for such career upgrading. Likewise, Fauth (1984) reported that "social expectations, combined with lower self-esteem and higher self-doubt, increase the likelihood that women will be reluctant to aspire or accept positions as educational leaders" (p. 71).

Methodology

The research design of the study was ex post facto. In this study, the independent variables were administrative placement positioning and gender. The particular position titles were utilized to better test the independent variable of administrative placement positioning based on a dependent variable. The dependent variable studied and assessed was administrative aspirations. Stratification of the sample provided control for bias within the sample; therefore, differences in the dependent variable could be identified.

The target population of the study included males and females who held administrative positions in higher education institutions. The specific administrative positions were department/division head, department/division chair, dean, vice-president, vice-chancellor, chancellor, provost, and president. The colleges and universities from which the sample was

selected were 4-year institutions located within a six state region including Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

The final sample size, based on an overall percentage of the administrator population from each state, consisted of 370 administrators. The following sample percentages were representative of the total number of administrators from the specific states in the sample: Alabama (20%), Arkansas (13%), Louisiana (13%), Mississippi (11%), Kentucky (17%), and Tennessee (26%). For each subgroup, equal numbers of males and females were selected. Specific numbers representing each subgroup were selected as follows: 20 individuals from the president/ chancellor/provost subgroup, 50 individuals from the vice-president/vice-chancellor subgroup, 100 individuals from the dean subgroup, and 200 from the department-division chair/department-division head subgroup.

The instrument used in the study was developed in three phases. Phase One consisted of designing a questionnaire based on a review of the literature and on interviews with administrators in higher education. Phase Two was comprised of a pilot study which was utilized for determining face validity of the instrument. The objective of the pilot study was to determine clarity of the items on the questionnaire. Phase Three was the refining of the instrument into the final questionnaire. Revisions were based on feedback from individuals in the pilot survey, as well as on additional interviews and comments from administrators.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample. Prior to the questionnaire mailout a postcard of prenotification was mailed to the random sample. A cover letter assuring confidentiality and explaining the study was mailed with the questionnaire to each individual selected in the random sample. A follow-up letter and second copy of the questionnaire were

mailed to nonrespondents to the first mailing at the end of three weeks. In order to follow up to nonrespondents, each questionnaire included an identification number.

The chi-square test was used to test the association between the distribution of the expected population and the observed sample with respect to gender and level of administrators in higher education. The tests of the research questions were conducted by utilizing frequency procedures, MANOVA, and follow-up univariate analyses. Demographic information was analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages and frequency distributions. Each item was treated individually and was assigned a code so that a descriptive profile of the respondents was formulated.

A separate MANOVA design was utilized for each of the multivariate independent variables. The independent variables were gender and administrative position. Gender was defined as male or female. Administrative position was defined as president, chancellor, provost, vice-president, vice-chancellor, dean, department/division chair, or department/division head.

The dependent variable was administrative aspiration level. For the dependent variable aspiration level, study participants responded to a question that listed higher education administrative position titles. Follow-up univariate *F* tests were utilized to further explain and clarify each multivariate effect.

Results

A total of 370 questionnaires were mailed to higher education administrators. Of these mailed questionnaires, 266 were returned for a response rate of 73%. The chi-square test was used to test the association between the distribution of the expected population and the observed

sample with respect to levels of administrators in higher education.

With three degrees of freedom, the critical $X^2 = 3.51$. The chi-square sum for the study equaled .33. Therefore, the observed sample may be safely assumed to be representative of the expected population with respect to level of administrative position. The chi-square breakdown is illustrated in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The chi-square test was used to test the association between the distribution of the expected population and the observed sample with respect to levels of administration and gender. With three degrees of freedom, the critical $X^2 = 3.51$. The chi-square sum for the

female population in the study equaled 2.57. The chi-square sum for the male population in the study equaled 1.66. The chi-square breakdown is shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Administrative Aspiration

For the dependent variable of administrative aspiration, a significant effect was found for administrative position (Wilks $\lambda = .38$, probability $< .001$), indicating significant multivariate difference between levels of administrative positions (i.e., president, vice-president, dean, and department head). The dependent variable of administrative aspiration was comprised of questions Q15 and Q16 (see Table 4). The results are summarized in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Univariate *F* follow-up tests were performed for the variable of administrative position on all dependent variables that comprised administrative position. A summary of the results is provided in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Significant effects of administrative position were found in the variable of administrative aspiration. Those administrators aspiring to a different level would most likely be those administrators with placement opportunities to progress upward in higher education administration. Thus, by the virtue of these positions, few presidents had aspirations for higher levels of administration (females = 9%, n = 1; males = 1.4%, n = 2).

Profiles of Higher Education Administrators

Analysis revealed that a majority of the men were 45 years of age and over (82.5%, n = 122), Caucasian (90.5%, n = 134), and held a doctorate (85.5%, n = 127). The majority of the men were employed by public institutions of higher education (79.1%, n = 117) and had previous administrative experience in faculty positions (53.4%, n = 79) and professional organizations (56.8%, n = 84).

The data further revealed that a majority of males had mentors at the master's level (56.1%, n = 83) and the doctoral level (71.6%, n = 106). At both master's and doctoral levels, males tended to have male mentors more frequently than female mentors. At the master's level 51.4% (n = 76) of the males had male mentors, and at the doctoral level 68.2% (n = 101) of the males had male mentors.

A majority of the male respondent sought opportunities to network (62.2%, n = 92) and believed that networking is helpful to individuals and new professionals in reaching career goals (90.5%, n = 134). Respondents were asked to rate how they felt about particular networking opportunities. The rating scale included the choices of "extremely important," "important," "somewhat important," and "not important." A relatively high percentage of males (43.2%, n = 64) rated professional groups/organizations as "extremely important" networking opportunities. Personal contacts and close associates were rated as "extremely important" networking opportunities by 54.1% (n = 80) and 41.9% (n = 62) of the males respectively. In addition, a relatively high percentage of males rated social clubs/groups (37.8%, n = 56) and civic organizations (39.2%, n = 58) as being "somewhat important" as networking opportunities.

With respect to career aspiration, the majority (54.1%, n = 80) of males in the survey chose to "remain at current level." Of those administrators aspiring to a higher level, a higher percentage chose the dean level. Department/division heads and department/division chairs comprised the largest number (n = 83) of administrators in the sample; therefore, the dean level would be the most likely aspiration choice of this subgroup.

Results of female respondents revealed that the majority of females were between 40 and 54 years of age (68.2%, n = 73), Caucasian (88.8%, n = 95), and held a doctorate (76.6%, n =

82). The majority of women were employed by public colleges and universities (65.4%, $n = 70$) and had previous administrative experience in faculty positions (68.2%, $n = 73$) and professional organizations (65.4%, $n = 70$).

Data also indicate that the majority of females had mentors at the master's level (50.5%, $n = 54$), doctoral level (57%, $n = 61$), and in their early professional academic career (54.2%, $n = 58$). The majority of females had female mentors during early professional careers. Conversely, a higher percentage of females had male mentors during their master's and doctoral programs. Probably this higher percentage of male mentors during graduate study occurs because of the high number of males versus females with doctoral degrees.

Of the female respondents, 47.7% ($n = 51$) reported networking helped them to obtain the position they currently held in administration. A large number (81.3%, $n = 87$) of females reported seeking opportunities to network, and 96.3 percent ($n = 103$) believe that networking is helpful to individuals and new professionals in reaching career goals.

In this study, females rated professional groups/organizations (62.6%, $n = 67$), personal contacts (57.9%, $n = 62$), and close associates (56.1%, $n = 60$) as "extremely important." They rated formal networking groups (28%, $n = 30$) as "important," and social clubs/groups (41.1%, $n = 44$) and civic organizations (33.6%, $n = 36$) as "somewhat important."

With respect to career aspiration, the majority (52.3%, $n = 56$) of females indicated that they desired to "remain at current level." Of those administrators aspiring to a higher administrative level, a higher percentage selected the dean level. Department/ division chairs and department/division heads made up the largest number ($n = 51$) of male and female administrators

in the sample; therefore, the dean level would be the most likely aspiration choice of this subgroup.

Conclusions

The findings of the study have implications for many groups. The study provides suggestions for current administrators in higher education, faculty members, career counselors, and those aspiring to administrative positions in higher education. Good career planning and high career aspirations were reported by Picker (1980) as being important factors to success in administration. Both career planning and career aspiration may be enhanced through active mentoring and networking activities. Therefore, the importance of the utilization of mentors and networks should be recognized as a way of developing and realizing aspirations.

Female administrators should learn how to be better mentors to aspiring administrators. A suggestion is to form mentor/protégé networks through national educational associations and/or related associations and organizations.

Administrators in this study who represented the lower administrative positions were the ones who aspired to higher levels of administration. The significant effect was found only in the administrative position itself and not relating to gender of the administrator. The study did not account for the vast underrepresentation of women in higher education administration but simply equally compared males and females.

It appears from the study that information regarding the variables related to administrative placement in higher education can provide the basis for a better understanding of the career paths of females in higher education administration. The information may be utilized for educational training in the areas of career development and career planning.

The target population for educational training would be females interested in or aspiring to administrative positions in higher education. Information relating to career aspiration development, as well as administrator profile characteristics, may be used by individuals, guidance counselors, career counselors, and/or instructors to aid in developing and strengthening the key characteristics needed by females in higher education administration.

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Table 1

Chi-Square Summary of Administrative Positions

	Adm 1	Adm 2	Adm 3	Adm 4	Total
Observed sample (%)	137 (55%)	65 (26%)	37 (15%)	11 (4%)	250 (100%)
Expected population (%)	200 (54%)	100 (27%)	50 (14%)	20 (5%)	370 (100%)
Chi-square	.02	.04	.07	.20	.33

Note. Adm 1 = Department-Division Head/Department-Division Chair; Adm 2 = Dean; Adm 3 = Vice-President/Vice-Chancellor; Adm 4 = President/Chancellor/Provost.

Table 2

Chi-Square Summary of Gender by Administrative Position

	Adm 1		Adm 2		Adm 3		Adm 4		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Observed sample (%)	83 (59%)	51 (50%)	31 (22%)	31 (30%)	19 (13%)	18 (17%)	8 (6%)	3 (3%)	142	103
Expected sample (%)	100 (54%)	100 (54%)	50 (27%)	50 (27%)	25 (14%)	25 (14%)	10 (5%)	10 (5%)	185	185
Chi-square	.46	.30	.93	.33	.07	1.14	.20	0.8	1.66	2.57

Note. Adm 1 = Department-Division Head/Department-Division Chair; Adm 2 = Dean; Adm 3 = Vice-President/Vice-Chancellor; Adm 4 = President/Chancellor/Provost.

Table 3

MANOVA Summary Table--Administrative Aspiration

	Wilks Lambda	*F*	*df*	Error *df*	*p*
Gender	.99	.37	2	59	.692
Administrative position	.38	18.16	4	118	<.001*
Gender X administrative position	.93	1.17	4	118	.329

*$p < .05$.

Table 4

Administrative Aspiration Univariate *F*--Administrative Position

Variable	Question	*F*	*p*
Q15	Which of the following best describes your career aspiration? Advance to higher position, remain at current level, scale back position?	.02	.99
Q16	If you are aspiring to a higher position in administration, check the appropriate level: President, Provost, Chancellor, Vice-President, Vice-Chancellor, Dean, Division/ Department Head, or Division/Department Chair	46.26	.001*

*$p < .05$.